

A NEW SAND LARK FROM WESTERN INDIA  
(SAURASHTRA)

BY

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AND

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On April 26 and June 17, 1953, Dharmakumarsinhji collected five specimens of *Calandrella raytal* at Bhavnagar, Saurashtra, four in April and one in June, which did not correspond in their coloration with the published descriptions of any known populations of this species. These specimens were sent for critical comparison to the Bombay Natural History Society and forwarded by the Society to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. They were examined by Vaurie who could not match them with any specimens in this institution of nominate *raytal* from the Gangetic Plain or of *C. r. adamsi* from the Punjab and Sind. The four specimens collected in April were in very worn plumage and the specimen from June about half way through the moult. Vaurie suggested that, if possible, additional specimens in fresh or unworn plumage be collected. These have now been received, consisting of two specimens in very fresh plumage collected on August 8 and four specimens in relatively little worn plumage collected on November 24. These six additional specimens, like the former, were also collected at Bhavnagar by Dharmakumarsinhji. The series of eleven specimens which shows, therefore, all stages of plumage, indicates clearly that the population of Bhavnagar constitutes a new and very distinct race of *Calandrella raytal* which is described as follows:—

***Calandrella raytal krishnakumarsinhji*, new subspecies.**

Type: Adult female; Bhavnagar, Saurashtra; November 24, 1953, K. S. Dharmakumarsinhji, collector. Deposited in the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Subspecific characters: Differs from any known populations of the species by being more heavily streaked and much darker in all plumages, dark gray above, not sandy as in nominate *raytal* or *adamsi*, the latter showing occasionally a faint vinous tinge. The dark shaft streaks are broader throughout and the lower throat and breast is more heavily and more abundantly streaked; flanks greyish and faintly streaked, not whitish or buffy and unstreaked as in the other two races. Bill short and thick as in *C. r. adamsi* but blackish above and below, not horn color above, and yellow at the base of the mandible as in specimens of *adamsi* or nominate *raytal* collected in recent years.

Measurements: Type, adult female, wing 78.5, tail 45, bill from skull 13. Other specimens: Wing, tail, and bill respectively, males,

82, 45, 13; 82+, 47+, 13; females, 76+, 43, 12.5; 78, 42, 12.8; 78+, 42+, 13; unsexed, 79, 45, 13 (very fresh), 85, 50, broken (very fresh), 81+, 44+, 13.5; 82+, 47+, broken; 83, 44+, 13. Range, 11 adults, wing 76-85 (80+), tail 42-50 (47+), bill (9 specimens) 12.5-13.5 (13.0).

Range: Known so far only from the type locality.

Ecology and Field Notes: These notes, given below, are observations made by Dharmakumarsinhji.

We take great pleasure in dedicating this new lark in honour of His Highness Raol Shri Krishnakumarsinhji, the Maharaja Saheb of Bhavnagar.

### Field Notes

This bird is common at Bhavnagar where it is found on the marine mud flats which extend 14 miles each way from Bhavnagar. The soil of these flats varies from brown to dark muddy-brown and becomes very dark when wet by the tide (Vaurie finds that the correlation in coloration is very good between a sample of this soil and the plumage of the birds). The vegetation, where present, consists of marine grasses and of the small 'Morad' plant (*Sueda nudiflora*). The bird is very confiding, allows close approach, and tolerates human and railway traffic to the extent of nesting close to the rails. During the breeding season it is found in twos or threes and at other times in flocks of 10 or 20 birds. It makes short flights and walks easily.

The nesting season lasts from March to September, the principal months being June to September during the onset of the monsoon. The nest is a fairly neat cup, made of grasses, string, or other such material and is placed on the ground often under the protection of the small 'Morad' plant. Some nests were hidden under discarded and dried husks of coconuts. Most of the nests found had been built on the railway embankment which faces to the northwest but in spite of their greater protection from the southwest monsoon, many were destroyed by the heavy rains. The clutch consists of two to three eggs which are whitish, spotted with light or dark brown markings, more heavily so on the broad end.

The male, when giving its courtship song, which is sweet and melodious, sings on the ground and while he sings erects his crown feathers and flutters his wings sideways. At other times he flies a little way up and descends after a short song. Occasionally, males may be seen sparring with wings outstretched and crown feathers erected. The common call note is a *cheruk-cheruk* which is so characteristic of the bird that it immediately identifies it at any distance.